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New York

President:	Ms. Wronecka	(Poland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Ms. Córdova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
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	Kuwait	Mr. Alfassam
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Lieutenant General Leonard Ngondi, Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur; Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; and Lieutenant General Frank Mushyo Kamanzi, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

Lieutenant General Kamanzi is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: It is my pleasure to open the Security Council meeting ahead of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Force Commanders and Heads of Military Components Conference in New York. I will be very brief because this meeting is essentially about hearing the voices of the Force Commanders who are deployed in the field. They are the ones who head the military components of our peacekeeping missions, and they are really best placed to tell us how the mandates negotiated and adopted by the Council are implemented on the ground and about the challenges they face in doing so.

(*spoke in French*)

I would just like to say that the programme that we have organized for the Force Commanders this week will allow them to keep abreast of the important decisions being taken here at Headquarters on peacekeeping in the context of the Security Council, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, the Fifth Committee and in our various interactions with Member States. We will also keep them informed of the way in which we perceive progress in the efforts we are making to be more effective and improve the performance of our missions.

The Force Commanders this week will participate in working sessions on the major current priorities, including the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and our initiatives to improve protection for our colleagues on the ground — our peacekeeping troops — which are initiatives that relate more broadly to issues of performance, as well as the carrying out of the strategic review and other topics linked to the improvement of peacekeeping effectiveness.

(*spoke in English*)

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the Force Commanders for their dedication. On behalf of all our colleagues at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, I would like to express my high appreciation not only for the way in which the Force Commanders are contributing to the implementation of their mandates, but also, more specifically, for their very strong engagement in helping us implement our action plan in the field, which is aimed not only at reducing the number of fatalities in peacekeeping, but, more broadly, at improving the performance of peacekeeping. Since we started the action plan, there have been some encouraging developments in the field over the past couple of months. I am very grateful for that. There is still a long way to go, but I am confident that, with the strong support of the Council and the strong engagement of our Force Commanders, we will be able to make a difference in terms of how peacekeeping performs and protects. I look forward to hearing from the Force Commanders.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Ngondi.

Lieutenant General Ngondi: With regard to the impact of the security and operational environment on mandate implementation by peacekeeping missions, the environment for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is shaped by five main aspects.

The first aspect is the fact that the Government of the Sudan is robust in exercising its sovereign authority in its territory, and that keeps the armed groups in check. However, while the relationship between the mission and the Government is cordial, the latter often restricts UNAMID's freedom of movement and

the inflow of resources and services, contrary to the provisions of the status of forces agreement.

Secondly, the existence of armed groups, inside and outside the territory, that are non-signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur also shape the environment. The leadership of those groups needs to be persuaded to embrace dialogue.

Thirdly, the intercommunal conflicts over natural resources, mainly between herders and farming communities, are another aspect. Land ownership remains at the heart of the Darfur conflict, and a durable solution for peaceful coexistence among different communities can be found only through embracing dialogue as the first step.

Fourthly, banditry and criminality exist owing to poverty, underdevelopment and the absence or inadequacy of law-and-order enforcement capacity. The remedy lies in capacity-building for public institutions and humanitarian and civil society organizations in order to deliver basic services.

Lastly, the proliferation of weapons exacerbates banditry and criminal activities. The ongoing arms-collection campaign by the Government has reduced banditry and criminal activities remarkably. However, the exercise is perceived to be discriminatory. UNAMID encourages the Government to collect illegal arms uniformly.

I will now address specific concerns raised in the concept note of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Force Commanders and Heads of Military Components Conference.

The first is whether the mandate is robust enough. It is opined that the mandate of UNAMID, being a peacekeeping mission, is sufficiently robust to achieve its objectives. The mission has all the relevant components and uses an integrated approach in its conduct of operations, in addition to religiously implementing the action plan proposed in the Santos Cruz report.

The second is whether the mandate is understandable and implementable. The mandate of UNAMID is anchored on four main pillars: namely, the protection of civilians, the delivery of humanitarian aid, mediation between the Government of the Sudan and non-signatories to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and, lastly, assistance in community resolution mechanisms. Those pillars are simple, understandable and implementable, as long as there is commitment and political will on the part of all parties to the conflict, including the interest groups.

That last concerns the support needed from the Security Council to help the mission fulfil its mandate.

First, it is recommended that a transition strategy be embedded in the mandate renewal. Lessons learned from missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire show that a good transition guarantees that gains made are not made in vain.

Secondly, the Government of the Sudan may be persuaded to adhere to the provisions of the status of force agreement and allow UNAMID freedom of movement and unhindered flights in the area of operations.

Lastly, the leadership of the armed groups needs to be persuaded to embrace dialogue.

In conclusion, peacekeeping missions remain important political tools for finding durable solutions to conflicts. Challenges, hazards and security threats emerging in the security and operational environment should be mitigated in order to allow the fulfilment of the mandates, as intimated in Santos Cruz report. UNAMID remains grateful for the support accorded by the Council, to Headquarters and other partners in its endeavour to implement its mandate in Darfur, the Sudan.

The President: I thank Lieutenant General Ngondi for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Major General Deconinck.

Major General Deconinck: I would have liked to be in Kidal this week to officially and proudly initiate the build-up of the Operational Coordination Mechanism unit. I was in the famous capital of Kidal exactly one year ago. That is just to say that time is passing, but we must be patient.

I am also proud to be at this meeting today and to interact with the Security Council on Mali and on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The Mission in Mali is made up of peacekeepers with great dedication and a commitment to bring peace and stability to the people of Mali. Nevertheless, we are extremely aware that our peacekeepers are making the highest sacrifice to bring lasting peace to Mali. To the many troop-contributing countries from around the

world, I would like to express a sincere debt of gratitude for their commitment, and I call for their continued support to peace and stability in Mali.

With that in mind, I believe the way that peacekeeping operations are conducted is shifting. The Santos Cruz report compellingly defines the environment in which we now operate. We owe it to our peacekeepers, both civilian and military, to implement the Action for Peacekeeping, to change our mind-sets and to adapt how we lead at all levels to the new challenges we face. Allow me to share my perspective on the security context.

The capture of the central region town of Kona marked the southernmost advance of the jihadist groups in Mali during the rebellion of 2012-2013. In that connection, the inner Niger delta, to the west of Kona, served as a fortunate natural obstacle to further jihadist movement southward. Last month, a MINUSMA force operation to Kona aimed to deliver security and stability in the face of the insurgent activities of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin terrorist armed groups

Other than by geography, those two events are not directly related — there has not been an enduring jihadist or terrorist presence in Kona since 2013. From 2015, however, terrorist armed groups have steadily re-established themselves in Kona and across the central region, particularly since the founding of the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin organization, at the start of 2017.

I perceive that as an example of a changing security and operational environment. Perhaps more important, I believe we have to recognize the significance of the central region in relation to the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which is at the heart of MINUSMA's mandate.

From the perspective of peacekeeping in a changing security and operational environment, how we understand the current security situation in Mali is as important as what the situation currently is. In a contested security environment, where the force and the civil population are targeted, the attitude of the force and of MINUSMA towards terrorist and insurgent armed groups is put to the test. Understanding the character of the conflict between those groups and the strategy they are waging against us is key to determining what our response should be — within our mandate and our rules of engagement. We have to adapt to the circumstances that define the current challenges.

The north is sparsely populated. There the force remains fully committed to the implementation of the Peace Agreement and to achieving stability in the regions as well as the restoration and deployment of the Malian State. In key population centres, the force, in coordination with the Malian Defence and Security Forces and armed groups compliant with the Peace Agreement, provides security to the local population and to the good offices of the MINUSMA Mission. The force also plays a key role in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process to establish inclusive and representative Malian Defence and Security Forces in the north.

Nevertheless, the north is also the seat of the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin terrorist organization and its many subordinate groups, which actively seek to undermine MINUSMA's efforts to bring about peace and stability. Those groups frequently conduct complex attacks on the force involving improvised explosive devices and indirect fire, giving MINUSMA its reputation as the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world. Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin attacks on MINUSMA's bases, such as the one last month in Timbuktu, have targeted civilian and military peacekeepers alike. The criminal trafficking networks sustain the activities of the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin groups in the north of Mali, but their regional influence is also evident in the attacks in Ouagadougou earlier this year. The regional dimensions of such attacks call for a regional approach to the crisis in Mali. We also see activity by the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin in Mali's central region as exemplifying a changing security and operational environment, which calls for a robust approach to peacekeeping.

Rightly, MINUSMA has invested in understanding the changing character of the conflict in Mali and the Sahel, but now we have to adapt to that changing security and operational environment in order to support the people and to support peace, stability and the fulfilment of our mandate, pursuant to resolution 2364 (2017). It is in that sense that robust peacekeeping is required. A commitment from the Security Council to Mali must be supported by a number of measures to deliver this new, more robust approach and to provide the necessary means to support the Government of Mali.

As outlined in the Santos Cruz report, we have to change our mindset. The force requires competent leaders and commanders with the right knowledge,

skills and experience to lead in a complex security environment. In return, we must decentralize some of our decision-making processes in order to enable them to deliver what we ask of them, in particular the means to ensure a lasting effect on operations.

In complex conflict environments, intelligence analysts must support our commanders with the ability and the means to collect and process all forms of intelligence. We also need to guard more effectively against intelligence collected on our force elements. We must invest in improving the training standards for our military peacekeepers both before and during their missions. We know the challenges they will face and we must ensure they come prepared. Within the force headquarters we have adapted our structure to provide more support to training, and we now need to create mobile training teams to support our contingents and troop-contributing countries.

We must insist on appropriate and universal standards of first-line medical equipment, in conjunction with a mandatory combat casualty care course for all troops. In addition, current United Nations procedures for casualty and medical evacuation need to be reviewed.

In Mali, as in many other peacekeeping missions, airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms, helicopters and aircraft are essential force multipliers. MINUSMA's access to the population, for both civilian and military peacekeepers, is greatly constrained by the shortfall in aviation assets.

Furthermore, a robust approach also calls for military components to take greater ownership of their operational logistics — to be able to set priorities, to control military transport assets and to determine convoy composition. In MINUSMA, every convoy has to be considered as a military operation of its own.

Finally, the added value of a multidimensional and integrated mission cannot be overstated. Complex conflict environments call for such missions to confront the multitude of factors needed to address the crisis in Mali, and nowhere more so than in the central region. A multidimensional mission must also include a regional approach to addressing the crisis from all the dimensions, in all countries of the Sahel region. The force is committed to facilitating several missions and to further developing and implementing such effective multidimensional policies to generate the conditions for sustainable peace and security in Mali and for the Malian people.

The President: I thank Major General Deconinck for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Kamanzi.

Lieutenant General Kamanzi: Like my colleagues, I have been asked to provide a perspective on the impact of the changing security and operational environment on United Nations missions and mandates. I would like to start by reviewing the evolution of the conflict in South Sudan. I will then talk about the operating environment and associated challenges, drawing on our experience, before then turning to how we are addressing those challenges in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The start of the conflict in December 2013 was due to a split of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the formation of the SPLA-in Opposition. At that time, fighting mostly took place in the Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states. The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on 17 August 2015, collapsed in July 2016, and the conflict resumed.

Since then, fighting has spread to other parts of the country, including the Equatorias, a critical food-growing area, where a multitude of new actors are currently involved. At the same time, long-standing communal conflicts, fuelled by competition for land and water resources, have persisted and, in most cases, have became more violent and destructive due to the widespread availability of automatic weapons.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development-led process known as the High-level Revitalization Forum resulted in the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 21 December2017. However, fighting among the SPLA, the SPLA-in Opposition affiliated with Riek Machar, the SPLA-in Opposition affiliated with General Tabang Deng, and other armed groups has continued in violation of the Ceasefire Agreement. The fighting often increases each time we approach another round of talks as parties jostle for prominence, as we are currently witnessing.

The security and operational environment in South Sudan has become increasingly complex. We have moved from a conflict that involves only two parties to one in which the Transitional Government of National Unity has the upper hand but faces political and military

opposition from multiple actors. The Government has increasingly gained control in central states, the capital, Juba, and in other population centres. However, opposition groups continue to operate in several outlying areas, in particular in the north, east and south near international borders, where they enjoy support and seek to retain control or gain tactical advantage.

The protection of civilians remains our priority. We continue to provide physical protection to more than 209,000 internally displaced persons, United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors who live and work within the five protection-of-civilian sites throughout the country. In addition, our presence in Bung reassures and supports the 15 humanitarian agencies that assist 13,000 refugees at the refugee site and the 11 humanitarian agencies that work with 54,000 refugees at the Jamjang refugee sites in Upper Nile and Unity states, respectively.

While that population is a small fraction of the estimated 1.69 million internally displaced persons within South Sudan, it requires more than 40 per cent of the force to accomplish that task. We are therefore working to free up more forces for mobile and outreach operations by introducing surveillance systems and other technologies to enable the protection of those sites with fewer troops and to improve our operational efficiency. More mobile operations will provide an increased security presence and create the confidence that allows people to return to their homes from protection-of-civilian sites and neighbouring countries.

The terrain and climatic conditions in South Sudan are particularly demanding. During the rainy season, from May to October, most of the unsealed roads that link states and major population centres are impassable. Our ability to be mobile for nearly half of the year is therefore highly constrained. As a result, we have had to disperse forces in order to maximize our ability to reach out to and support humanitarian actors. To achieve that, we operate from 17 bases, seven of which are occupied by a single company, each with a maximum of 150 troops. Our forces must travel more than several hundred kilometres between bases, along single-track roads or by the limited number of helicopters we have. That presents additional challenges for resupply and force security.

To address those issues and challenges, we are taking the opportunity afforded by the recent induction of the first elements of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) into the Mission, by reinforcing our operating bases in Yambio and Torit and establishing a new one in Yei, in the south of the country. At the same time, UNMISS military engineers have been repairing roads and operating in remote locations to enable us to be more flexible when responding to new requests for assistance. Those operations also improve security along the main supply routes that link the seaport at Mombasa to South Sudan through Kenya and Uganda.

In the course of carrying out our mandate, we face obstruction, access denials and violations of the status of forces agreement. Sometimes those tactics are employed by Government forces as well as by opposition parties to try to prevent us from gaining access to areas where fighting is taking place. At other times the fragmentation of opposition groups leads to commanders acting independently and not effectively responding to orders or direction from their higher headquarters. In other cases criminals and opportunistic armed groups have inhibited the work of humanitarian actors, at times detaining them for several days in order to demonstrate that they control particular areas. Maintaining a relationship with the Government and opposition groups is vital, while realizing that all parties are responsible for violating the cessation of hostilities agreement and the associated destruction and atrocities against civilians.

Employing patience, good communications with all parties and a robust posture are therefore important to our approach. Our patrols have demonstrated unwillingness to be turned back or otherwise inhibited, even if we have to negotiate for several hours or escalate the issue for resolution at headquarters level before proceeding with our work. We also endeavour to be agile and proactive, where necessary positioning troops where we believe conflict might break out. That has often calmed situations and lessened or prevented violence.

We continue to improve the security and performance of our force peacekeepers. A review of each of our operating bases and protection-of-civilian sites has been completed and action points, including the maintenance of perimeter fencing, security lighting and the provision of closed-circuit security systems, are now being addressed. We are undertaking a detailed review of casualty evacuation procedures and have established a force-protection advisory team, whose responsibilities include identifying risks to the force and sharing best practices to mitigate them.

Resolution 2406 (2018) authorizes a troop ceiling of 17,000 peacekeepers, which includes the Regional Protection Force. We currently have more than 13,700 personnel; we expect the remainder of the Ethiopian battalion of the Regional Protection Force to arrive next month, bringing us closer to 15,000 personnel. In addition to enabling us to deploy more forces in the strategically important Equatorias, the deployment of the first elements of the RPF allows us to provide more security in Juba, protect civilians and assist other United Nations agencies and partners. We also work closely with the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism to enable it to monitor ceasefire violations and to understand what transitional security arrangements may be necessary in future.

In conclusion, encouraging all parties to reach a political solution is imperative. That will in turn improve the Mission's prospects of achieving its mandate. For our part, we continue to work to deter violence against civilians through proactive deployment, while working closely with humanitarian actors, monitoring and investigating human rights abuses and working with all stakeholders to build durable peace. At the same time, we are working to improve the organization, capabilities and employment of the force, along with the required enablers in order to effectively support the Mission mandate and protect our force.

We are grateful for, and continue to count on, the Council's support.

The President: I thank Lieutenant General Kamanzi for his briefing.

I remind all colleagues that the concept for this briefing aims to keep it as interactive as possible — the main added value being the question-and-answer segment with the Force Commanders. Therefore, so as to take advantage of this opportunity and hear more from our guests, I encourage Council members to keep their statements brief and focus on the question-and-answer segment.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Polish presidency for organizing this meeting with Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Force Commanders of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. I thank them for their informative briefings, which have provided us with additional insight concerning the many obstacles that must be overcome in order to restore peace and security in countries affected by deadly conflicts.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of the thousands of men and women deployed to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. My delegation pays tribute to those peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations. Their sacrifices compel us — regardless of our differences on certain aspects of peacekeeping — to step up cooperation in our work to make the hope for peace and security of millions of people throughout the world a reality.

Given the information provided to us by the various briefers, my delegation would like to make several observations concerning the host State's consent and the mandates and resources of peacekeeping operations.

Undeniably, peacekeeping operations are not intended to replace, but rather to support, the authorities of the host State within the framework of a crisis-exit strategy based on an inclusive and credible political process. Wherever United Nations peacekeeping operations, the authorities of host States and all stakeholders in a crisis — as in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia — succeeded in committing to dynamic cooperation based on mutual trust and achieving realistic and consensual goals, they were able to create the conditions necessary for a successful transition, thereby paving the way forward for post-crisis reconstruction and national reconciliation. We therefore believe that quality relations among the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Force Commanders and all stakeholders involved in the process of exiting a crisis, including local populations, are key, given that they create the conditions necessary for acceptance and firm national ownership of United Nations action.

Clearly, the emergence of non-State actors with political and territorial claims, who are sometimes responsible for actions that run counter to the goals of peace and stability, is one of the major challenges

facing the implementation of the principles on which peacekeeping is based — namely, the consent of the host State, impartiality and limiting the use of force to situations involving self-defence. Those new challenges call for us to develop sustainable multidimensional responses and to ensure — despite the constantly changing nature of operational environments — support for the political process aimed at ending the crisis, which remains the cornerstone of peacekeeping operations.

The difficulties brought up by the Force Commanders give us reason to believe that the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations depends upon defining clear mandates and setting achievable goals based on a thorough assessment of the environment and the operational limitations specific to every individual mission. Unspeakable acts of violence carried out, in particular by armed groups, against Blue Helmets, humanitarian workers and civilians are a recurring challenge that compel us to develop mandates, the robustness of which must be commensurate with the complexity and asymmetrical nature of the environment in which any given peacekeeping mission is deployed. Those mandates must provide United Nations forces with the agility, flexibility and mobility necessary to move into areas in which violence or warning signs of violence directed against the civilian population exist.

It is also important to note that mandates must not only be flexible but also sequenced so as to enable missions' priorities to adapt progressively to changes related to the host country's sociopolitical and security environment. For example, the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, which was initially centred on security needs, subsequently shifted its focus on support for maintaining and sustaining peace, thereby enabling better planning for the definitive withdrawal of the mission. Of equal importance to the flexibility and realistic goals of mandates, providing adequate human, financial and material resources is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. With regard to human resources in particular, we believe that the Santos Cruz report offers a realistic approach to needed adequate troop training prior to deployment and an assessment framework, which enables filling the gaps observed in theatres of operations through capacity-building.

Moreover, the issue of financing peacekeeping operations, which my country would like to see predictable and sustainable, is as important as providing equipment that meets the requirements of peacekeeping in asymmetrical environments through triangular partnerships.

United Nations missions are made up of a mosaic of contingents and staff members who, although inspired by their common search for peace and stability in countries in conflict, hail from diverse countries and cultures, which necessarily affect their perception of their obligations related to peacekeeping in challenging environments.

In conclusion, my delegation commends the work done by the members of United Nations peacekeeping forces, whose merits are reflected above all in their daily efforts to maintain the cohesion and unity of action of peacekeeping missions so that, despite many challenges, they can continue to be the most effective United Nations instrument in the service of the peace continuum.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for providing this opportunity for a candid and constructive discussion with our Force Commanders, whom I thank for their briefings earlier and whom I am putting on notice that I intend to ask them many questions. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for everything that he has had to say, as well as for his leadership on those issues. I think it is very important that our Force Commanders are able to be here in the Security Council to speak truth to us and to be as clear as they need to be. I hope they will be candid.

Before I go into some of those questions, though, I would like to recall the visit that some of us on the Council made to Mali in November 2017. We had the great honour of participating in the dedication of a memorial to all who lost their lives serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. I think it is important that we take a moment to pay tribute to all the peacekeepers who have given their lives in service of the United Nations, and to all the brave women and men who are serving now in support of the United Nations peacekeeping operations. I would like to offer the United Kingdom's thanks for their service and for the service and leadership of the Force Commanders who are here today.

Peacekeeping is one of our Organization's greatest achievements. It is an integral part of what our peoples around the world think of when they think of the United Nations, and this year we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping. As we

strive for reform in the wider United Nations system, so we must work to make peacekeeping more effective and efficient through better mission planning, more pledges of troops and capabilities and stronger mission performance. We therefore welcome the report on improving peacekeepers' safety and security by the former United Nations Force Commander Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, the United Nations action plan and the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative that has resulted from that. We see three key priorities. First, the Security Council should take a longer-term view of conflicts and set more strategic and sequenced mandates. Secondly, peacekeeping should be better coordinated with other United Nations activities, such as peacebuilding and development. Thirdly, peacekeeping performance should be improved, including accountability where performance is not up to standards.

Here is my first question for our Force Commanders. How is the action plan being implemented in their missions? Major General Deconinck mentioned the importance of intelligence in peacekeeping and situational awareness, that is, sending our peacekeepers out with knowledge of what is going on around them. What improvements have been made in the use of peacekeeping intelligence and how can we in New York further support those efforts? In the context of efforts to further improve peacekeepers' performance, I know that the Secretariat has been tasked with developing an integrative performance policy framework. What is the Force Commanders' view of what such a performance framework should contain? How can we incentivize better performance in missions?

I have a few specific questions on some of the missions. I appreciated what the Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur had to say about the reconfiguration work. I would like to ask Lieutenant General Ngondi what he thinks the next step in the Mission's reconfiguration should be. In particular, are any challenges being faced in delivering changes alongside the mandate to protect civilians?

Again, I thought that the statement on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was very helpful. We know, of course, that MINUSMA is working in the same space as the Joint Task Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. How well are the military actors working together to ensure that they are contributing to the common objective in their defined ways? How is the link with development and humanitarian work doing? Is there a coordinated plan that brings together the various military actors, and the development actors behind them, to make the most of all the tools we have at our disposal in Mali?

Finally, regarding the United Nations Mission in South Sudan — and this is something we talked about yesterday in the Council (see S/PV.8249) — I would like to say how impressed we have been by some of the swift and decisive action taken recently in response to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. That is obviously still a big problem in some missions. It would be helpful to have some examples of best practices used in South Sudan that might help other missions learn and respond effectively if that happens to them. I will conclude there, in the spirit of interactiveness, and would like to reiterate my sincere gratitude to all of those serving in blue for the good of all of us.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his assessment of the current state of United Nations peacekeeping. We also thank the Force Commanders of the military components of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Darfur, Mali and South Sudan for the updated briefings on the state of affairs in their missions. We greatly value the efforts of peacekeepers working in difficult conditions and we would like to pay tribute to all who have given their lives for peace and stability.

The security of peacekeeping contingents is an extremely important issue that we should focus on not only during the preparation of peacekeeping operations but throughout the work of the United Nations presence in a country. The type and nature of the problems in contemporary crises are constantly changing. Peacekeeping operations are more often encountering terrorist attacks on civilian populations and peacekeepers and dealing with the effects of organized crime and the illegal trade in arms and drugs. The situations in the countries where missions are deployed and every theatre of operations have their own characteristics. The proliferation of such threats naturally causes experts and scientists to think seriously about the very concept of the work of the Blue Helmets, and the logic of their actions when it is impossible to distinguish civilians from militants or, for example, when a host country is unable to adequately protect civilians from new threats. That way of thinking often

gives rise to the same call, urging that all peacekeepers be given so-called robust mandates and additional intelligence-gathering and use-of-force capacities. We have already heard echoes of that thinking today. For our part, we believe, on the contrary, that in such circumstances peacekeepers should act extremely cautiously. After all, peacekeeping operations embody the ideals of the United Nations. Any mistake can have tragic consequences and undermine the Organization's authority.

The Security Council, troop-contributing countries and host States need an objective assessment of the extent to which expanded mandates for the use of force enable real breakthroughs to be made in fulfilling mandates, and that is especially urgent in the light of the increase in casualties among peacekeepers in the worst trouble spots. Let us be blunt. The experience of missions with robust mandates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali is not very convincing so far. It has also raised a number of serious legal, technical, logistical and staffing issues that should be resolved in an intergovernmental format by the specialized agencies of the United Nations and with the direct participation of troop contributors.

We have to be realistic about this. An inability to find a workable response to the root causes of conflicts and the threat of terrorism should not automatically lead to strengthening peacekeepers' mandates on the pretext that there are no other options. There are options. First, our approach to planning the mandates and peacekeepers' operational work should be more intelligent and painstaking. We should not burden missions with irrelevant tasks that should be handled by specialized United Nations structures. They should focus on the priority issues — supporting the political process, strengthening host countries' national capacity and ensuring security. I would like to hear about how that planning is being done in current conditions.

Furthermore, when preparing and conducting operations, it is important to take into account the views of troop-contributing countries and not to neglect the views and preferences of the local population, some of whom may be supporting armed groups, as in fact happened in the Central African Republic. We should not forget that such cases threaten the security of peacekeepers, civilians, humanitarian workers and country-team staff. Another important factor is ensuring that Blue Helmets are properly trained and have the appropriate equipment. It is unforgivable to create a situation for which there is a robust mandate but where it takes too long to create the conditions in which it can be fulfilled.

At this point I would like to touch on the active security of contingents and the collection and analysis of intelligence, which my British colleague spoke about. We believe that this kind of activity can be carried out only within the limits that have been agreed to by States — in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, with the consent of the host Government, and only for the specific purpose of ensuring the security of peacekeepers and the civilian population. We cannot permit the use of intelligence-gathering means for any other purpose, including achieving the so-called political aims of the mandate.

I want to particularly emphasize the importance of strict adherence to the basic principles of peacekeeping — the consent of the parties, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence and in implementing the mandate of the Security Council. If these are not upheld in robust efforts or, especially, in preventive responses to virtual threats, peacekeepers could become directly drawn into conflicts. We noted in particular that some of today's briefers made references to the Cruz report. As far as I remember, Member States discussed it in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in March, but it was not approved. Some of its positions are contentious and arguable, and we see no reason to implement its recommendations. We hope that Mr. Lacroix shares that point of view, and we would be grateful if he could clarify the situation.

We also consider unacceptable the attempts by various countries to promote initiatives for United Nations peacekeeping that a small group of States have agreed on outside the United Nations. The non-United Nations Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, which permit the use of force against a host Government, are one such initiative. That would immediately make Blue Helmets a party to a conflict. One condition for the success of any peacekeeping operation is constructive and effective cooperation with the host country, which bears the primary responsibility both for the political process and for addressing the root causes of conflict, as well as for ensuring the security of its population, including protecting it from terrorist attacks.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Lacroix, the

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and the three United Nations peacekeeping mission Force Commanders for their briefings. I want to pay tribute to the Commanders and the more than 90,000 peacekeepers currently deployed all over the world in peacekeeping missions, and to express my deepest condolences to the families of the peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

The environment in which United Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed and the mandates they are supposed to implement are increasingly complex. Both the security risks for peacekeepers, and casualties among them, are on the rise. There is a mismatch between the ever-increasing demands of mandates and the limited resources available for them. In accordance with its mandates, the Security Council should play a part in helping United Nations peacekeeping missions cope better with new challenges when meeting the responsibilities they are assigned by the Security Council. First, it is important to be proactive in facilitating the political settlement process of regional hotspot issues. Some protracted hotspot issues have resulted in the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the region and its surrounding areas, with serious effects on the performance of other peacekeeping operations in the same region. The international community should step up efforts to settle regional hotspot issues in the region, while the peacekeeping operations should be responsive to efforts to create the conditions conducive to the political settlement of hotspot issues.

Secondly, peacekeeping missions need clear, feasible and focused mandates. They should be able to focus on the central task of peacekeeping and to abide by peacekeeping's three main principles, while taking into full consideration such factors as the situation on the ground, existing resources and troop-contributing countries' capacities to help host countries strengthen their own security capacity. The work of adjusting to priority tasks and work priorities during each stage should be dynamic, according to the changes in the situation on the ground. Furthermore, when conditions permit and when the countries concerned request it, it is essential to formulate a practical and feasible exit strategy in a timely manner. When mandates are being designed or readjusted, troop-contributing countries should be given more opportunities to participate in discussions.

Thirdly, the Secretariat should be guided to strengthen support for peacekeeping operations. The Secretariat and missions should pay attention to the security and safety of peacekeepers, develop security rules for peacekeepers and enhance early-warning and internal information sharing against security threats. They should ensure the availability of life-saving and life-sustaining services and medical evacuation in high-risk environments. The report on improving the security of United Nations peacekeepers proposed several recommendations, and we hope that the Secretariat will discuss them with Member States and implement them.

China is a major contributor of troops to peacekeeping operations and the second largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget. At present, 2,500 Chinese peacekeepers are on active duty in 10 missions. China is actively implementing various commitments announced by President Xi Jinping in further support of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we are ready to work with the general membership to improve the United Nations peacekeeping system in a joint effort to maintain international peace and security.

Lastly, I would like to ask what the main factors are affecting peacekeeping operations' ability to respond to security threats. Are inadequate equipment and resources the main difficulty?

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his valuable briefing on his mandate. I would also like to thank Lieutenant General Leonard Ngondi, Force Commander of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID); Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; and Lieutenant General Frank Mushyo Kamanzi of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for briefing us on the situations of their peacekeeping missions.

Equatorial Guinea expresses its gratitude for the work being done in these difficult missions. They represent the true essence of this Organization and the operationalization of its ideals. We would like to pay tribute to all those who risk their lives every day on behalf of the Organization in various parts of the world but, above all, on the African continent.

In the spirit of this meeting, we would like to put forward the following questions.

With regard to UNAMID, for its success, what challenges does the mission face in fulfilling its mandate? What should the Security Council do to ensure that mandates are fully implemented without amending them?

Concerning the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, what is lacking for the tasks to be carried out correctly? In order to fully implement its mandate, what needs to be improved both, on the ground and in terms of the materials used and developed during operations?

With regard to UNMISS, what should be changed, improved or abandoned in order to ensure that mandates are correctly and properly implemented? On whom does the success of a peacekeeping operation depend?

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to convey our gratitude for the convening of this meeting. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Force Commanders of three important peacekeeping operations for their briefings.

As a troop-contributing country, Peru believes that peacekeeping operations are essential tools of the United Nations collective security system and that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to provide them with the mandates and to ensure that they have the necessary capacities to deal with the conflict situations in which they operate. Unfortunately, the Organization's activities in Darfur, Mali and South Sudan frequently face situations that determine the likelihood of peacekeeping operations achieving the objectives for which they were designed. I refer to situations in which the proliferation of internal and external actors hinders the viability of a political process.

In the light of that problem, we would like to highlight three central elements to be considered when establishing the mandates of peacekeeping operations, on which we have some questions for today's briefers.

The first question concerns the cooperation of the host country and the support of the relevant regional and subregional organizations. In that regard, we would like to ask the Force Commanders present what additional measures could be deployed to promote greater support from national and regional actors for the respective peacekeeping operations?

The second question concerns realistic and flexible mandates that are adaptable to evolving situations. That implies having adequate capacities, including, inter alia, training, equipment, modern technology, medical services and transport. In that regard, we would like to ask our guests about the best ways to bridge the gaps between the difficulties facing them in their tasks and their available capacities.

The third issue is the need to establish appropriate exit strategies with a view to building a sustainable peace. On that point, we would like to know the views of our guests about the possibility of peacekeeping operations establishing a relationship with the United Nations country team and the synergies that can be generated in the transition towards a post-conflict situation.

Furthermore, we believe that independent reviews of peacekeeping operations can help to better identify the priority elements to improve those operations in order to meet the needs observed on the ground. It would therefore be interesting to know the views of our guests about the usefulness and relevance of such reports.

Peru strongly supports the priority given by the Organization and its Secretary-General to the security of the Blue Helmets, and highlights the rapid reaction of the Secretariat to adopt measures to deal with such a situation as part of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Finally, we believe that it is necessary to approach in parallel the work of peacekeeping operations and the root causes of conflicts, such as human vulnerability, corruption and organized crime, among others.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like first to thank the Polish presidency for having organized this important debate on a topic to which, as the Security Council knows, France is resolutely, consistently and deeply committed. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and the Force Commanders for their particularly enlightening briefings.

Allow me to thank the Force Commanders for their service, their professionalism and their daily commitment to executing their mandates. I would like also to pay tribute to all their military and civilian personnel, of whose deep commitment all of us here are aware. France would like once again to pay tribute to the memory of all those who have sacrificed their lives in their commitment to serving the United Nations. The

Force Commanders should know that their officers, non-commissioned officers, airmen, sailors and soldiers and, in particular, they themselves have our full confidence.

As the Secretary-General recalled at the launch of his Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which France fully supports, peacekeeping is a particularly complex, difficult, sometimes frustrating but crucial and irreplaceable undertaking (see S/PV.8218). While peacekeeping must above all be part of the political goal of peacemaking, our ambition to protect civilians who are victims of conflict, violence and massive violations of human rights also demands that, together, we be more effective and more able to make a real difference on the ground.

Our collective ambition must therefore be that our operations — the United Nations operations — be conducted and implemented in optimal conditions. We must therefore provide Force Commanders with the necessary means and resources to execute their mandate smoothly and effectively. As members knows, France will continue to spare no efforts to that end.

It is therefore necessary that the troops that we entrust to United Nations peacekeeping operations be fully operational and effective. In particular, that requires complete and high-quality predeployment training. France is fully committed to supporting such operations by training nearly 30,000 French-speaking African soldiers each year, who themselves serve as strong troops for peacekeeping operations.

The requirement for fully operational and effective troops also implies better equipment that is adapted to the terrain and the threat, as well as a better operational posture. We fully believe that better operational performance will reduce the number of Blue Helmets killed or injured in operations, which is still far too high. In that regard, we fully support the recommendations of the Santos Cruz report.

Finally, we are convinced that effective peacekeeping entails bolstering relations between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, in particular by strengthening African peace operations. That is a key priority for us at the highest political level. We would therefore be interested in the opinions of our briefers on that issue.

In conclusion, my question today is addressed to the three Force Commanders and focuses primarily the deployment and use of new technology to better protect their assets and their soldiers, while we are aware that such technology will never replace the central role of the men and women whom they command. Peacekeeping forces are all too often targeted by armed groups with indirect fire or improvised explosive devices, which, as we all know, still cause too many casualties in their ranks and prevent them from carrying out their primary mission of protecting civilians. My questions are therefore very simple and straightforward: How can we help them better? What do they need to better anticipate threats and indirect fire? What early-warning and protection technology do they require?

On behalf of France, I would like to thank the Force Commanders once again for their exemplary commitment, with all our due respect.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I thank the President for organizing today's important dialogue between the Security Council and the Force Commanders. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the three Force Commanders present for their clear and concise briefings. We think it is very useful for the Council to speak to the military staff who have to implement in dangerous circumstances what we in the Council agree around this safe table.

We have witnessed an alarming increase in hostile attacks against peacekeepers over the last few years. The Force Commanders of today's missions face numerous challenges and threats to the security of their forces — we have just heard three of them speak about this.

Too many peacekeepers are killed on mission. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pays tribute to all United Nations peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. Our hearts reach out to the families and loved ones they left behind.

The changed operational environment of peacekeeping operations calls for action by the Security Council, by the United Nations and by its Member States. We therefore see today's debate as being closely linked to the open debate on organizing peacekeeping operations of 28 March 2018, which was presided over by my Prime Minister, Mr. Mark Rutte (see S/PV.8218). Thanks to the leadership of Secretary-General Guterres and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, we are all giving a quality push to peacekeeping this year.

In that context, we think it is also important that the Council show leadership and take up its responsibility. We look forward to the high-level seminar on peacekeeping intelligence in July and to the high-level event on peacekeeping in September. We pay tribute to the important work done by Côte d'Ivoire as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, and we look forward to its presidency in December in this context.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. We applaud the tangible progress made in the implementation of the action plan based on the Santos Cruz report, entitled *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*.

Working together, we must change the way we do business. As Major General Deconinck said, we must change our mindsets. And we must become more capable to act decisively. Working together, we must make peacekeeping more effective. To protect peacekeepers and support them in implementing the mandates they are given by the Security Council, peacekeeping operations have to become more robust.

I will focus on three issues relating to making peacekeeping more effective, and with each issue I will have a number of questions for the Force Commanders: fisst, mission performance reviews; secondly, the importance of an integrated approach; and, thirdly, improving actionable intelligence.

With respect to my first point, on mission performance reviews, since 2017, peacekeeping operations have been reviewed comprehensively since 2017. We especially focus in our discussions in the Security Council on such issues as resource constraints, performance and the cost-effectiveness of mission components. In our opinion, those reviews provide an important opportunity for stock-taking and can provide the basis for much-needed adjustments to mission mandates.

When we review a mission, however, we must also focus on the operational needs on the ground. Mission success depends, on the one hand, on the availability of appropriate resources, and, on the other hand, on having realistic expectations. In that regard, in our view, proper force generation remains essential and needs our continued attention. We welcome the rotation-scheme system that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is developing. In that regard, my questions to the Force Commanders are as follows: Are their operational needs currently fulfilled? Can they plan ahead when it comes to the military they work with? And are the troops Force Commanders receive well trained when they are deployed under their command?

As to my second point, the need for an integrated approach, we feel very strongly that we need an integrated approach that combines three elements, namely, diplomacy, defence and development. Diplomacy serves to get a political solution, defence serves to achieve security and development serves to provide hope for a better future for civilians. Only if those three dimensions come together can peacekeeping operations be effective, which also means that the pillars of the United Nations must work better together. We are therefore a strong proponent of the Secretary-General's reform of the peace and security architecture. My questions to the Force Commanders are as follows: Do they have the impression that the development pillar of the United Nations is working closely enough with them? What could be improved? If they see a need for a quick-impact project — for instance, with regard to water supply — do they call a colleague from the United Nations Development Programme to do that and make it happen?

As to my third point, situational awareness, we see a clear need in missions for integrated and systematic information- and intelligence-gathering and information- and intelligence-sharing among the various actors on the ground. Missions should improve their understanding of the local environment and of the threats that the mission and civilians face. Actionable peacekeeping intelligence is the key to success in the complex environments in which today's missions operate. It is also key for the protection of civilians. Peacekeepers need eyes and ears on the ground to build and maintain situational awareness. I would like to be blunt: better peacekeeping intelligence helps to save lives, in our opinion, which brings me to my last questions: Do the Force Commanders currently have enough early-warning capacity when it comes to the asymmetrical threats they face? Could the Commanders share the key challenges in their missions? How could the Security Council help them to overcome those challenges?

We look forward to the answers of the Force Commanders.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and all the Force Commanders for their respective briefings on the main challenges in today's peacekeeping operations. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the brave men and women who are serving in different peacekeeping missions around the world.

I want to focus on the unprecedented challenges peacekeeping missions are facing today, as the Force Commanders of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur have already explained to us.

Peacekeepers are increasingly being deployed to protect civilians and support complex political processes amid ongoing fighting and high-risk situations characterized by asymmetrical threats. Targeted attacks against peacekeepers and innocent civilians are not only on the rise, but they have increasingly continued to become the norm rather than the exception. This point has already been highlighted by my colleagues, but it needs to be repeated because of the magnitude of the challenge we are facing.

The recent attacks that led to the deaths of peacekeepers in Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are a clear indication that such threats are growing in scale, frequency and complexity. It is therefore imperative that peacekeeping missions undertake reforms and adapt to the changing security dynamics. In that regard, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations review has certainly made important recommendations, and their timely implementation will certainly go a long way in making United Nations peace operations fit for purpose. That, at least, is our view of the matter.

Devising the right political strategies and operational approach has also never been at critical as it is today. In that regard, I would like to suggest the following suggestions, and will be pleased to hear the comments of the Force Commanders. I subscribe to the view expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom on the need to be frank in this exchange of views.

My first suggestion has to do with what has been reiterated by many on numerous occasions, that is, the need for pragmatic and flexible interpretation of the basic principles of United Nations peacekeeping. The traditional peacekeeping versus peace enforcement debate should, at a minimum, be looked at in a more nuanced manner. Peacekeepers cannot, and should not, remain indifferent in the face of significant threats to themselves or to innocent civilians, whom they are supposed to protect.

The Force Commander of MINUSMA referred to the robust use of force. How much flexibility do United Nations peacekeeping principles allow for resorting to the robust use of force? In our view, peacekeepers should have a robust mandate with a clear concept of operations and rules of engagement based on a thorough situational analysis, threat assessment and planning. That will allow them to have a robust posture in defending themselves and protecting civilians in the face of mortal danger. However, having a clear mandate, concept of operations and rules of engagement is not enough.

Therefore, the third point is that peacekeepers need to have the necessary capability that is credible enough to deter spoilers who threaten the mission's mandate and civilians, as well as the peacekeepers themselves. Being adequately equipped also has a deterrence value that is rarely taken into account. We would welcome comments from the Force Commanders on this point. We need to ensure that peacekeepers have adequate equipment, including force enablers and multipliers to be able to counter hostilities and fulfil their mandate effectively in an asymmetrical environment. That has already been mentioned by the Force Commanders, and emphasized in particular by the MINUSMA Force Commander. Peacekeepers must also receive adequate training and acquire the necessary skills to operate in volatile security situations.

Fourthly, although the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) (see S/2015/446) recommended that United Nations peacekeepers should not undertake counter-terrorism operations, it did not rule out such a possibility by capable regional forces and/or ad hoc coalitions authorized by the Security Council. For instance, the African Union (AU) and its regional mechanisms have shown greater commitment and readiness to deploy forces in asymmetrical environments. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a case in point. Hardly any other mission exemplifies the need for greater partnership than AMISOM — a Mission that is operating in one of the most hostile environments — and let us not overlook the real meaning of what the Mission

does on behalf of the international community. AMISOM peacekeepers are facing asymmetrical attacks almost daily, and yet they are underfunded and in a dire logistical predicament. Maybe that applies to other missions as well. Of course, AMISOM is not a United Nations peacekeeping force, but the experience it has had is germane to our discussion here, particularly with respect to counter-terrorism activities. In that regard, it would be useful to hear the opinions of the Force Commanders of how peacekeepers should overcome the challenges posed by terrorism.

From our perspective, on the basis of the principles of complementarity and division of labour, the United Nations should be ready to share the burden with AU-led peace support operations, among others, through the provision of a financial and logistical package. In that connection, the relevant recommendations made in the HIPPO report are a step in the right direction. It is absolutely necessary that they be translated into concrete action.

We know that the points I have raised are easier said than done. We have no illusions that the strategic and operational challenges will be easily overcome. But in the light of the seriousness of the matter, it is imperative that they be addressed as promptly as possible. Otherwise, the commitment to the protection of civilians will remain mere words repeated ad nauseam, with little meaning in the real world, where so many need protection in practice, not theory.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation to the Force Commanders for their briefings and for their work to contribute to peace and stability in Africa. We are grateful for what they and the troops under their command are doing by way of discharging their responsibilities. I look forward to hearing their comments.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I thank the Polish presidency for organizing this important interactive discussion, including the very informative briefings by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and the Force Commanders. We express our appreciation for their insights and commend them for their heroic service. The Kazakh delegation will make general observations and then ask specific questions with regard to individual missions.

Just a few hours ago, many Member States commemorated, together with the Secretary-General and the Office of the President of the General Assembly, a very important occasion — the seventy-third anniversary of the victory day in the Second World War by attending an exhibition at Headquarters, organized by nine countries from my region. As the Secretary-General mentioned in the opening ceremony,

> "Today's commemoration has more meaning than in any of the previous years. We see a world in which conflict is proliferating. We see a world in which so many wars are taking place. So, I believe it is absolutely essential to remind us all of the lessons of the Second World War."

We also regret that so many conflicts and wars are taking place today, especially in Africa and particularly in Darfur, Mali and South Sudan, which we are considering today. In that regard, I would like to remind the Council of the initiative led by my county to elaborate a joint programme to stop all violent conflicts by the United Nations centenary in 2045, which is mentioned in the Council's first presidential statement adopted this year (S/PRST/2018/1).

Our peacekeeping forces remain a most valuable tool. At the same time, the challenge is to use them to create the necessary conditions for political solutions and inclusive negotiations and to implement peace agreements. Above all, we should foster strong and effective cooperation among Governments and between the United Nations and the African Union (AU), especially the AU High-level Implementation Panel and, wherever possible, bring in subregional groups, like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development or selective countries with influence. Other helpful activities could include arm- collection campaigns and the resettlement of large numbers of internally displaced persons, without which there can be no durable peace.

We must also ensure security sector reform to generally improve security situations and to bring about an overall reduction in criminal activities. The successful process of reconfiguring the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur should be an example for other missions too. The challenge before us is to accelerate the peacebuilding mandate, including taking a more proactive role in capacity-building, strengthening governance and improving quick-impact and community stabilization measures, while also working closely with United Nations country teams, primarily through planned multi-year strategic frameworks.

We also commend all the missions on implementing their mandated tasks under very difficult circumstances. We support the Secretary-General's independent review reports of the missions, his Action for Peacekeeping initiative on the basis of the Santos Cruz report, and his good offices. It is in that context that we would like to ask the following questions.

First, how can we modify mandates to enable the resumption of capacity-building and training in the State's armed forces and institutions through a long-term security sector reform programme? Secondly, what must we do in order to stop the ongoing military actions of armed groups and militias, and the widespread violence, all of which lead to severe economic decline, an escalation of the humanitarian crisis and severe food insecurity for millions, the vast majority of whom are also displaced? Thirdly, despite the Secretary-General's action plan, recommendations and best intentions, the challenges seem insurmountable. Development takes time, but how can we initiate comprehensive strategies for economic development and building resilience from the very beginning? Fourthly, how can we achieve intercommunal reconciliation and build confidence among local populations?

Finally, we all know how badly we need improved predeployment and in-mission training, more efficient strategies and better equipment and surveillance capabilities. Last but not least, however, how do we bridge the capability gap? Based on the Force Commanders' experience in the field, what are their suggestions for possible and feasible ways of addressing those gaps?

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for convening the Force Commanders here this week. We think that it is an extremely valuable event when Force Commanders have a chance to come together and discuss the common challenges they face in today's environment. As missions deal with ever-greater challenges, it is important for them to share experiences and best practices. I also thank the Polish presidency for convening today's meeting, in which we were able to hear briefings from three great Force Commanders. Not only are their briefings very important, but I would like them and their colleagues in the Chamber to convey how much the Council, and the United States, appreciates everything that the troops under their command do, all the sacrifices they make and their dedication to duty.

As the challenges that we ask peacekeeping to address have grown and the rate of peacekeeper fatalities is on the rise, it is now more important than ever to assess whether a peacekeeping mission is the right tool at any given time for confronting specific challenges to international peace and security. The United States has expressed its strong support for seeing the United Nations raise the bar for the performance of United Nations peacekeeping by institutionalizing a culture of performance, starting with the development and implementation of a comprehensive performance policy that identifies transparent standards for performance and detailed measures to hold underperformers accountable. But performance alone is not sufficient.

In April of last year, Ambassador Haley articulated a set of principles to the Council (see S/PV.7918) to guide our review of peacekeeping missions as their mandates come up for renewal. I believe that those principles are a good prism through which to review mandates, as well as a reflection of our collective discussions in the Council. Much of what I have heard from Council members here today is also reflected in those principles, which are that peacekeeping missions must support the achievement of political solutions; missions must have the cooperation of host countries; exit strategies must be clearly articulated and mandates must be realistic and achievable. Where such conditions are not present, we must carefully consider whether or not the current mandates continue to make sense, how the Council should adjust them and whether there are alternative and more appropriate conflict-resolution tools.

I have just a few questions for the Force Commanders who briefed us today, keeping those principles in mind and articulating a larger philosophical view of peacekeeping and how their missions fit into that prism. With regard to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, is its mandate realistic and achievable? It has a particularly difficult mission. If not, bearing in mind that the Force Commander will endeavour to carry out whatever tasks we entrust to him, which tasks does he feel are really unachievable?

With regard to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, does the Force Commander believe that the Mission's peacekeepers are operationally prepared to meet its requirements, particularly where the protection of civilians is concerned? What does he think the Mission would need to achieve operational readiness? The question of operational readiness is one

we could perhaps ask all missions. I welcome the Force Commanders' comments on what is needed to achieve full operational readiness.

Lastly, does the security situation in Darfur require a strong military force presence or could police, for example, assume a more robust role?

I would once again like to thank the presidency for convening today's meeting.

Mr. Alfassam (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Force Commanders of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali for their valuable briefings.

I would like to address the following four points: threats, performance, exit strategies and agreement among stakeholders. First, with regard to the threats that peacekeeping forces face, over the past five years there has been a regrettable increase in the number of fatalities among peacekeepers. The Security Council has supported the Secretariat in addressing that serious issue. The dynamic nature of conflict and the need to address more than one conflict at a time, as well as the plethora of combatant parties, make us greatly appreciate the major role played by the military components of peacekeeping operations. They should receive greater support from the Council through realistic and flexible mandates. In that regard, we would like to commend the effective role played by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Secretariat in implementing the action plan outlined in the Santos Cruz report with regard to the increase in the number of fatalities among peacekeepers, whose sacrifices in the cause of maintaining peace and protecting civilians is recognized and appreciated.

Secondly, with regard to performance, we welcome cooperation between peacekeeping missions and the Secretariat to identify performance-measurement criteria. We stress that such criteria must measure tangible, concrete budget-related aspects as well as measurable indices. However, peace remains a lofty, priceless goal that cannot be measured in monetary terms. The Council bears a great responsibility for identifying the requirements of the mandates it designs in order to achieve and maintain peace and protect the lives of civilians and peacekeepers while measuring and improving performance. Discipline-related issues, including the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, are of paramount importance. The Council has repeatedly supported that policy and expressed its appreciation for the troop-contributing countries that have addressed incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse in a decisive, immediate and responsible manner.

Thirdly, with regard to exit strategies, the role of military components in peacekeeping missions is not limited to situations where there is ongoing fighting or where ceasefires must be maintained among warring parties. It covers every stage of a mission, from downsizing and reconfiguration to agreement on an exit strategy that can ensure a smooth transition to post-conflict peacebuilding. The peace continuum requires a flexible and gradual transition from military functions to tasks related to stabilization and peacebuilding, as in the case of UNAMID. The role of the military component is the linchpin that holds the mission's other components together. Moreover, continued cooperation between the military and police components of a mission ensures peacekeeping and support for capacity-building, as currently exemplified in the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti.

Fourthly, with regard to agreement among the parties contributing to peacekeeping missions, during our March open debate on peacekeeping operations (see S/PV.8218), we spoke in depth about the role of parties contributing to peacekeeping operations, and stated that the military component is a key pillar for cooperation among them. From the very beginning, the host countries are our first partners in peacekeeping operations, followed by the troop-contributing countries, which play a crucial role in triangular cooperation with the Secretariat and the Security Council. After the troop-contributing countries come regional and subregional organizations, which are playing an increasingly important role, particularly in Africa, as we heard earlier from the briefers. We stress the need for consistent and concerted efforts among all those parties. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations has made available its annual draft report (A/AC.121/2018/L.3), which covers the military component, and this month it is discussing the financial and administrative aspects of peacekeeping operations. All the parties that I have mentioned are essential

in reviewing both the mandates and the military components of peacekeeping operations, and continued cooperation among them is therefore urgently needed.

In conclusion, we are pleased that the Council has heard briefings from the Force Commanders on their missions, and we welcome continued interaction with them under the auspices of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We would once again like to acknowledge the sacrifices that peacekeepers make in extremely dangerous environments, and to thank troop-contributing countries and all contributing parties, to whom we express our gratitude for the sacrifices that they have made to maintain peace.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the three Force Commanders for their valuable perspectives, Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing, and you, Madam President, for providing a platform for today's discussion.

We welcome the renewed efforts spearheaded by the Secretary-General to strengthen peacekeeping and move from words to action in making peace operations fit for the twenty-first century. We, the members of the Security Council, must play our part in that process. That entails providing missions with realistic mandates and adequate resources, but also putting political pressure on all key actors and supporting the broader United Nations system's efforts. United Nations cooperation with regional and subregional organizations must also be enhanced. From listening to our three Force Commanders, it becomes clear that immense challenges remain, and we know that the peacekeeping environment today is more complex and entails higher risks than ever before.

In our own experience from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), peacekeeping intelligence is vital for making informed decisions and for operational planning. It is crucial to ensure that missions are able and ready to act on information received, and it is also important to have thorough selection processes for senior mission leadership and military and police commanders The evaluation of leaders must improve, and special attention should be given to a willingness to act, take initiative and assume responsibility. In addition, uniformed units must have the right training, skills and equipment to be able to protect civilians and themselves and to deliver on mandates. That requires support for capacity-building and better reporting on underperformance.

We firmly support efforts to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations system. Proper gender mainstreaming and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda also requires adequate funding.

Let me conclude by focusing on the questions that I have for our briefers. My first question is for all of them. What do they think the Secretariat, the missions and the troop-contributing countries should do to increase the percentage of both uniformed and civilian female personnel?

My second question is for Lieutenant General Ngondi of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Given that the task of protecting civilians is the biggest challenge that he faces as a Commander in delivering on his mandate, how does he address that? How are conditions affected by the ongoing reconfiguration of the mission?

My third question is for Major General Deconinck. I would like to ask him to elaborate on the current challenges that MINUSMA is facing in terms of protecting hospitals, health-care facilities and personnel from attacks, and documenting and reporting such attacks. Are the Mission's mandate and resources sufficient for those tasks?

My fourth question is for Lieutenant General Kamanzi. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan, like the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has a more flexible and effective brigade unit. In some regions, we have also seen regional reserves that can be moved between missions on short notice. What would he say are the pros and cons with regard to those more flexible and robust units as brigades or regional reserves?

Ms. Córdova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia thanks your presidency, Madam, for convening this important meeting. We are also grateful for the briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and by the Force Commanders of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the

United Nations Mission in South Sudan, via video-teleconference from Juba.

The international landscape is not static. It is undergoing profound changes that in recent years have been reflected in the constant threats posed by terrorist groups and transnational crime. That complex reality has shown how important it is to make structural changes in peacekeeping missions in order to enable them to adapt more effectively to their environments and to repel such threats. In the Sahel, for example, both the fighting capacity of armed and terrorist groups to carry out asymmetric attacks, and their ability maintain a strong ideological presence in order to win over supporters, has increased. That has also led to growing profitability from criminal activity, which has become a modus vivendi for such groups. We would like the Force Commander of MINUSMA to elaborate on that issue and comment on the measures that he believes should be adopted in the region.

Over the past almost 70 years, peacekeeping missions have have helped to build peace in various countries around the world by implementing their mandates. Sadly, that has come at a very high human as well as material cost, owing to the deaths of the valuable military components, police officers and civilian personnel who have fallen victim to attacks in the discharge of their duties. Bolivia would like to pay sincere tribute to each and every one of the members of United Nations peacekeeping operations contingents around the world, who stand firm in their efforts to do their work despite some missions' material constraints and insufficient resources, the difficult conditions on the ground and the fragile and volatile security environments that they function in. We are also grateful to the countries that contribute troops, police officers, observers and civilian personnel for their generosity, solidarity and commitment to the United Nations system and to countries afflicted by armed conflict and instability.

The continuing attacks on peacekeepers, which recurred only a few days ago in a number of places, have shown once again the urgent need to strengthen key areas of missions, mainly those relating to situational awareness in the field, units' mobility and reaction capacity and, above all, the strengthening of defence and protection measures for camps and the troops themselves. Peacekeeping missions also need to see improvements in material and especially technical areas if they are to implement their mandates more effectively. It should be noted that the proper equipping and training of troops is the responsibility not only of the troop-contributing countries but of our Organization in general. Furthermore, providing the sustainable, effective and adequate economic, human and material resources that missions need requires analysis that is technical and logistical but above all realistic. In that regard, we emphasize the priority of improving institutional agility for the deployment of troops, as well as selecting those who are the best trained and most specialized to respond effectively to the asymmetrical contexts we have discussed.

As we said in the last open debate on peacekeeping operations in March (see S/PV.8218), important insights and tools for information and recommendations for advocating for change and improving the performance of missions on the ground, as well as optimizing the various levels of decision-making and planning in the system, are reflected in the Brahimi report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (see S/2000/809) and the recommendations in the 2015 report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446). Their overall content examines the various options, mechanisms, tasks and challenges facing such operations today.

We also welcome the report entitled *Improving security of United Nations peacekeepers* by the former United Nations Force Commander Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, better known as the Cruz report. It is a relevant tool that makes a significant contribution to understanding peacekeeping missions' security issues, as well as their structural aspects, mainly with regard to the leadership, mentality, equipment and training of troops. Bolivia believes that it is essential to address those aspects in order to achieve reasonable objectives.

In that regard, it would be helpful to hear first-hand from the Force Commanders here today about the degree to which the parameters in the report are being implemented. And if they are not, how could they be applied in the context of each of their missions? With regard to operational behaviours, the Cruz report also emphasizes that every mission is unique and that different situations require different action, depending on the threat in any given area. However, what never changes is that the interpretation of the mandates should support taking action and not be used to justify inaction. From that perspective, what other steps should the Security Council take to prevent inaction from putting

the lives of contingent troops at risk? A preventive approach, within the framework of an in-depth, case-by-case study of the context, is key to the proper design and understanding of mandates, whatever their nature, while respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, promoting national ownership and without using that approach as a tool for intervention.

In conclusion, we underscore the Security Council's efforts to achieve the objectives established in all its current mandates. Unity among all actors is crucial to strengthening the financial, tactical, operational and strategic aspects on the ground in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations. It goes without saying that no peacekeeping mission can succeed without the support of the host country. In that regard, continued, smooth coordination, information exchange and confidence-building mechanisms between missions and local authorities are essential.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Poland.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Force Commanders for their comprehensive briefings, giving us the missions' perspective on issues that are relevant to the Security Council's considerations of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions. This year's Heads of Military Components Conference is very timely.

The subject of peacekeeping has been broadly discussed over the past few months. The entire international community has been alarmed by the current state of the security of mission personnel and consequently of the people they aim to protect. We have not only seen dynamic changes in the security environment but, more importantly, a significant increase in threats and direct attacks on peacekeepers. We should take every opportunity to condemn such actions in the strongest possible terms. Needless to say, the security of peacekeepers is of paramount importance for all stakeholders involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations, but we must not forget that it is currently a decisive factor in missions' effective implementation of their mandates.

One of the topics we are considering today is the mandates themselves. The importance of re-evaluating missions' composition and mandates based on the realities on the ground has already been discussed in the Council. I would like to specifically focus on the situations on the ground, their relation to mandates and their direct impact on missions. I would like to ask several questions regarding the missions, but I think this should also be an opportunity for the Force Commanders to convey what they have to say to the members of the Council. I will therefore proceed with my questions.

From the perspective of the Force Commanders, do the current mandates enable the missions and Force Commanders to work actively and, if necessary, proactively in order to fulfil their tasks? If the answer is yes, I would appreciate it if they could prioritize and name the key challenges, limitations or gaps still hampering their missions' effectiveness. If the answer is no, I would encourage them to highlight the areas that the Council should focus on to ensure support for Force Commanders and troops on the ground in implementing their mandates and bringing us closer to the missions' desired end stage.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my most sincere appreciation to all the Force Commanders present in the Chamber today, and to the men and women they serve with around the clock, for their dedication and commitment to international peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to draw the attention of the Force Commanders to the questions directed to them. Council members would appreciate comments from the Force Commanders on the realities of their respective field missions.

I now give the floor to Mr. LaCroix to respond to the questions and comments.

Mr. Lacroix: I will be very brief because I think it is very important that the Security Council listen to the responses by the Force Commanders. I would like to thank members for their support and their commitment to our peacekeepers and for the tribute that was paid to our colleagues in the field.

I would also like to reiterate the importance of the continuous engagement of the Security Council in support of the collective efforts aimed at improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping. That is very much the spirit of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which is about candidly sharing the challenges that peacekeeping faces, explaining what we are trying to

do to address those challenges and highlighting the importance of strong support from Member States to effectively address the challenges. We need the support of Member States as political actors, as troop- and police-contributing countries and as financial contributors and partners.

Turning briefly to the action plan, let me say that we are determined to continue very actively to implement it. Although it does not take on board all of the recommendations of the Santos Cruz report, it is based thereon. I think it is important to highlight that the action plan is not the overall strategy for peacekeeping, because the overall strategy for peacekeeping places primacy on politics. It is very important to highlight the importance of Member State support to further advance political solutions in the many situations where political processes are not moving fast enough. The action plan is essentially a set of very practical recommendations and measures aimed at making the important tool of peacekeeping more effective and more apt to address the current challenges. The implementation of the plan is a collective undertaking. I would again like to express my gratitude to our colleagues in the field, particularly the Force Commanders, for what they are doing.

As I said, we are very determined to move forward. One of the key priorities of the plan is to make sure that we implement our rules and procedures at every level. Another priority is to place emphasis on training. We have a specific plan of action for training, which we have shared with Member States. We work on performance assessment, for which we have a new methodology that we are mainstreaming throughout missions. We are also candidly sharing performance issues with the troop- and police-contributing countries, whenever appropriate, in a spirit of partnership and with the goal of remedying these issues. We are also working on other very important priorities, such as identifying the key shortages in equipment and how to use modern technologies, as well as the importance of further improving the way in which we handle fatalities and casualties.

Against that backdrop, I would like to underline the key principles of peacekeeping, which have been recalled by a number of Council members. Those principles remain the cornerstone of our action. I think it is absolutely critical to highlight the importance of working in close partnership with host Governments and to make sure that there is consent from them. I think impartiality is also a key principle. Our mandates dictate that we support political solutions. The reality is that in many situations we face forces that oppose the advancement of political solutions, and that do that quite often by going after peacekeepers and our colleagues on the humanitarian and the development side. The issue of the use of force is also very relevant to that. Peacekeeping is not war. The use of force is determined either by self-defence or by the importance of defending the mandate. In some cases, defending the mandate includes making good on our protection-of-civilian mandate, but also making sure that we defend ourselves and the mission against those who are in the business of derailing a political solution.

Turning to the strategic review, I wish to say that we will continue to conduct and to implement strategic reviews. We need the support of the Security Council for that. At the same time, it is probably too early to assess what the impact of strategic reviews will be on missions will be. It will be important for Member States to take a look at the impact in order to judge for themselves whether such reviews make a difference or not. We intend to continue along those lines.

Let me conclude by saying that I agree with the comments made on the issue of capability shortfalls. In spite of the fact that we have more potential contributors to peacekeeping and more pledges for our missions, we still have a critical capacity shortfall in a number of areas. It is important to further work on creative solutions to remedy the situation. Smart pledges represent an important avenue in that regard, whereby pledges and contributions rotate on a yearly basis in order to make sure that the contributors of critical assets do not see their assets committed for too long to a particular mission. It is equally important, as some Member States recalled, to highlight the importance of an integrated approach. Some of the Force Commanders made that point very accurately.

Finally, on the issue of complementarity, it entails making sure that we enable other organizations, particularly regional and subregional organizations, to respond to the situation with their own operations, adequately supported with predictable and sustainable support and funding.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for the clarifications he has provided.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Ngondi to respond to the questions and comments.

Lieutenant General Ngondi: Before I respond to the specific questions, I should like to make two remarks. First, I am very thankful for the kind words that Security Council members have expressed to us in recognizing the hard work that peacekeepers are doing in the field. Secondly, I appreciate the desire expressed by members to support peacekeepers either as a Council or as individual States.

Having listened to the debate, I want to suggest the need to borrow from the military planning and decision-making process. I think there is a gap in our planning and in the formulation of mandates. The military planning and decision-making process requires expert examination in order to understand the situation and to identify what needs to be done and with what strategy. At the end of the day, therefore, they come up with ends, ways and means and mobilize them to undertake an attack. They have a very deliberate strategic implementation mechanism. If our mandates were arrived at through that process, I do not think that we would be having problems. I know that violent situations require rapid action. However, that does not mean that we do not follow up to ensure that a complete decision-making process has been followed from the very start. That can still be followed up. Adequate capability and strategies will therefore have been provided to implement the ways, means and ends.

The second issue is robustness. As Force Commanders, we have debated that at length We know that every mission has its unique security and operational challenges. Robustness does not necessarily mean the use of force. The nearest definition of robustness that we have is being vigorous in pursuit of an objective. "Vigorous" does not necessarily mean using weapons, machinery and so on, but using what is available, depending on what has been configured. Its second meaning is "capable of performing without failure" — the determination to perform, whether by fighting or pursuing other objectives. Robustness is therefore not confined to the field alone. It cuts across the board — from the Security Council to the field and from the field up to Headquarters and Member States. Everyone must ensure robustness and work out what that they want to pursue. If a strategy exists, the objective can be achieved. That is why I said, in answer to the specific question from the concept note, that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was sufficiently robust, because it has the capabilities in terms of the various components put together. If it is sufficiently robust, it will achieve its objective. Having said that, let me turn to the specific questions.

First, to respond to the question from the representative of the United Kingdom as to the next step after reconfiguration and the challenges that have been experienced in mandate implementation, it is an open secret that UNAMID is on its way out, having done what it was supposed to do. That process started a long time ago, with the adoption of resolution 2363 (2017), which indicated that direction. Unless something changes, if all factors remain the same, that train is on its way. What we have therefore said very clearly is that what we need next is a very good, detailed transition plan. The transition will try to ensure that the gains that the United Nations has made in the field do not go to waste but are handed over to someone. We pass the baton to someone. That can be the Government, a United Nations country team or civil-society organizations that take on the role of providing basic services, because our mandate is to ensure the protection of all civilians, deliver humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people, assist with community resolution mechanisms and, of course, to support the political aspect, which is mediation between the Government and the parties that have not signed the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. That is presumed to be the answer, and it can be given life only by the people who are discussing it. The mission is on its way out. The answer is a smooth transition to ensure that the gains that have been made are not in vain.

Secondly, what are the challenges around those four areas? There are a few. For example, where the protection of civilians is concerned, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are registered is more than 1.7 million. There are only a few of us, and we cannot cover every individual. There are areas where we cannot be and areas we must focus on, particularly IDPs who have differences with the Government, which we know can very easily cause a crisis. That is where we need to use our limited capabilities. They may be there not because of the conflict but because of other problems, such as drought or intercommunal conflict, which the Government can sort out as long as it has the capability. At the moment we are present in most areas because of a lack of capacity on the part of the Government. However, the area we need to focus on is where there are peacekeeping-related issues and the presence of armed groups, which can attract

Government hostility at any time. That is where we need to be present. It is where people have run away from, and if we are present, we will create a pull factor for the IDPs to come from wherever they ran to, return to their own area and start their normal lives again. In general, that is what UNAMID sees, and that is the direction.

Where mediation is concerned, somebody has to deal with it. I tend to think that at the ground level we interact with the population. But the top leadership of the groups that have not come to the table must be persuaded to do so. They must be educated to see that this is the only way to benefit the people whom they profess to lead. Otherwise, they are likely to attract a lot of hostility on the part of the Government, because it will always try to exercise its sovereignty over the territory.

With regard to major challenges in performance as a whole, a mission must be integrated, bringing together all competencies in terms of those in uniform as well as civilians with various remits. We have observed that such integration sometimes does not extend to all levels. It exists within the mission headquarters, at the sector level and at the team sites, where the activities are. Not everyone is always at those sites — other than those in uniform, the peacekeepers — although civilian components should be there. The integration therefore exists only at two levels, not at field level. That is a question of resources, of what is available. People sometimes do not understand that is where action is needed and that the success of the mission is measured by activities at the lowest tactical level. If, in formulating the mandate and identifying the resources, the ways and means, it can be ensured that all levels are covered, that is good, and any mission will perform in the way it is supposed to. We must therefore be robust in formulating the mandate. We must pursue the process of formulating it with vigour so that we come out with an implementable mandate.

Next, I would like to respond to the question from the representative of the United States. Does the situation in Darfur require a military presence? We have mapped out the area of operations. As I have said before, we know where the military is necessary. The military is necessary where there is a potential for clashes between the Government and parties to the conflict or among other parties in the country, as well as some that are outside the country.

Now, that is where we need to be. We are now there as well as elsewhere, but we are only elsewhere because those who are supposed to be there are not available. That is the capacity gap in the Government that I have been talking about, as well as in the humanitarian bodies in the country, which do not have the capacity to do what they are supposed to do, and which is why we are there. If those capacities can be improved, we can leave that area and focus on the small area where the real crises are, so as to ensure that such crises do not happen or, if they do happen, to mitigate them, so that the population does not suffer a lot. We therefore have a military presence in those specific areas in adequate numbers, with relevant capabilities, in order to tackle the challenges there in terms of coverage, footprint and terrain. That is where we need to be. Until that is sorted out — by the parties being brought to the table or by declaring a cessation of violence between the two — and until the debate, the negotiation, the dialogue is undertaken and the mediation process gets under way, only then will we see the mission pulling out.

The representative of Sweden asked again about how the reconfiguration affects the protection of civilians. As I said, it is a huge area to cover, with few personnel, a small footprint. That is the issue. With the reconfiguration, we are not everywhere. As soon as we downsize, we leave some areas, reducing the footprint of delivery to those who benefit from our services. We cannot do everything everywhere. We can only do what we can do with the capabilities that we have. Nobody should think that the military can be under every tree. No, priorities have to be set based on the intensity of the conflict or danger and on the capability that exists — and we must be where we are supposed to be, even though there will be people who will not benefit from our services. That is the danger. The protection-of-civilians aspect is affected by reconfiguration because we are downsizing while the capabilities of the Government and the other humanitarian organizations are not enough to take over for us. That is the effect of reconfiguration. But we will never be there forever. We will get out.

Lastly, with regard to the question posed by the President in her capacity as the representative of Poland as to whether our mandate is implementable, the answer is that it is implementable because it is understandable. Its components are very simple and understandable and are therefore implementable. They have been implemented. The only challenges are the places where

we have some difficulties here and there, where there are restrictions imposed on us — the terrain factor, and the fact that we cannot act as fast as we would like to, that sort of thing. But the mandate is implementable. It has been implemented, including the task of reducing or downsizing and handing over various areas. All those tasks are also implementable because they are well understood and because we have the will and the capacity to fulfil the mandate and as soldiers to obey the instructions we have been given.

The President: I thank Lieutenant General Ngondi for the clarifications he has provided. I now give the floor to Major General Jean-Paul Deconinck to respond to the questions.

Major General Deconinck: I thank you, Madam President, and all members of the Security Council for their support to the missions in the field and for their tributes, which I will convey when I return to Bamako, and to Mali, next week.

I would like to add something to what my colleague from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur said. It is important to develop our planning process, to study the equation between the mandate and the means so that we can define the ways and means and ends. But that is not enough. What is missing is what we call in the military a restated mission: did we understand what is expected of us and what is expected of the mission? That is important.

In answer to the United States representative's question as to whether the mandate is achievable, I cannot answer that. I would have to explain the operation design of the whole Mission, the desired end-state of the Mission, the military end-state and the decisive points and objectives. After laying all that out, I might be able to say whether it is achievable or not.

But I would first like to turn to effectiveness, starting with my own Mission. As Force Commander, my task is to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement, create or recreate a safe and secure environment throughout Mali so that we can redeploy the armed forces and security forces, so that the national, regional and local authorities can be redeployed, and so that basic services can be ensured. As Force Commander, I also support the entire Mission with a force in various domains in the field. I also have to protect United Nations personnel and uphold the United Nations mandate. In theory, I could say, "Yes, I can achieve that mandate, of course." But I have to bring safety, security and peace in an asymmetric environment, and sometimes — indeed, more and more often — in combat conditions. In answer to the question as to whether the mandate is achievable, we would therefore have to say perhaps not.

On the other hand, with respect to ways and means and ends, I could say, as my predecessor did in 2016, that I need — we need — more resources, capabilities, people and so on. In 2016, we increased the personnel ceiling by almost 2,000. At the moment we are still working with a gap of 1,400. But the number 1,400 says nothing. It is about capacities. We are still lacking some capacity. Capacity is the product of people, equipment, training and mindset — people, training, equipment and mindset. So when we are talking about effectiveness, I have to cope with that gap in capacities. I will live with that gap until the end of my mandate at the end of this year, and my successor will likely live with that gap too. What we have to do is increase our effectiveness. And that relates to the Santos Cruz report. I will not enter into a debate about whether that report is or is not endorsed or approved by the Council.

I will say that, in April or May of last year, I started taking measures to increase effectiveness, because I have to do that. It is about force generation, and I kept pushing the force-generation button with the Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We definitely need that. It is about tasking reducing tasks with no added value. For instance, we must stop guarding some small compounds, close them and regroup units. It is about stopping guarding Operational Coordination Mechanism compounds and mixed unit compounds. But they have to be capable of doing that. It is about simply receiving more force protection units, which would mean I would be able to generate additional units using my own resources. That is about increasing effectiveness.

Of course, training and equipping soldiers and advising are mentioned in the Santos Cruz report, as is working on the mindset of the soldiers. It is about counter-threat, which should not be confused with counter-terror: "I have to live and I have to act under threat continuously". Counter-threat is also about countering improvised explosive devices, countering indirect fire and so on, which should not be done with kinetic action alone. When it comes to countering indirect fire, for instance, we have to address the whole chain of command of the opponent, which we do in the Mission as a whole. It is a whole-of-mission concept.

We spoke about intelligence. Of course, there is a crucial need to have current and actionable intelligence to first understand the situation, not only for the force but also primarily for the mission. Where and how should effort be directed — in which domain and location — in order to increase situational awareness. Secondly, we need intelligence to prevent attacks. Three weeks ago, in the aftermath of the attack in Timbuktu, I told my intelligence people that they would have to predict the next location, the next date and the form of the next attack. There is a need for intelligence. Presence, posture and profile have nothing to do with kinetic action, but it is important to be present, have a good posture and profile. It is also about being present and maintaining credibility among populations and deterring the opponent.

I will now move onto force protection.

(*spoke in French*)

The French delegation asked what technological capacities we still need to strengthen protection. The answer is straightforward: we need more early-warning radars, as we only have a few and I need one in every compound. I also need additional short-range and medium-range drones and command systems.

(*spoke in English*)

On the performance of contingents, we are continuously evaluating units. My Deputy Force Commander is in Kidal this week to evaluate two battalions. We do that not only evaluate, but also to take action and to correct what is wrong. We are also measuring the performance of our operations. When it comes to operations, Madam President, you asked how we could avoid inactivity and how our mandate could be more active. We are of course working with the whole Mission in that regard with all the means at our disposal, every six to eight weeks. We conduct such activity, first, for situational awareness, secondly, to ensure the freedom of movement of the force and of our partners and, thirdly, to counter the threat and operate within the seven pillars. That allows us to employ a bottom-up approach to integrate the Mission at that level.

Command control is also on my wish list, as I cannot change policy alone. To do that, I need the support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Lessons learned from past errors are also essential, so as to avoid future failure and to better act or react to recurring incidents.

On effectiveness and coordination with military actors. I am only the Force Commander; there are many military actors active in Mali. I have sometimes heard talk of a military traffic jam in Mali. That is certainly not the case — I would be happy to have 10 more battalions in any of my forces.

We coordinate on our main areas — operations, logistics, support, intelligence and so on — with five partners. The first of those partners is the Malian armed forces. We also coordinate with the European Union Training Mission in Mali, the Group of Five for the Sahel and Operation Barkhane, as they are all mutually reinforcing. I cannot perform any kinetic action related to counter-terrorism; instead, I must rely on our partners to do that. There is therefore a need for coordination and better synchronization among the partners, which we undertake every day.

I will mention one point about one of our partners, the Malian Defence and Security Forces. I do not think I mentioned the need for sound security sector reform plan for the Malian Defence and Security Forces. Such a plan is key because those forces are not only part of our exit strategy, but they also represent part of the solution for implementing the peace agreement. Security sector reform is therefore key, not only for Mali but also for the surrounding countries.

My last point will touch upon female personnel, in response to the question from the representative of Sweden on how to attract more female military personnel within the force. First, I will say that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali is the most dangerous mission in the world, limiting its effectiveness. Secondly, we need women to engage with the population. Again, it is about situational awareness and so on. We need women. However, it is the responsibility of troop-contributing countries to engage more and to commit more female personnel.

On the question about the protection of hospitals — which hospitals? The hospitals of the force or the civilian hospitals in the country? That is not my job. It is of course my job in the case of threats or attacks against civilians and any body. When I say body, I mean including hospitals and so on, on Malian territory; of course it is my job. But the Malian Defence

and Security Forces are on the front line. I am there in support in such cases.

The President: I thank Major General Deconinck for the clarifications he has provided.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Kamanzi to respond to the questions and comments.

Lieutenant General Kamanzi: Like my colleagues, I would like to first make some general comments, beginning with the issue of mandate implementation, or the ability to achieve a mandate. The achievement of a mission mandate is indeed a whole-of-mission task comprising all the components that constitute the mission: the civilian component and, most important, the civilian leadership, and uniformed components, namely, the police component, which, in our case, is also composed of formed police units and individual police officers, as well as the military component.

For us to achieve our mission, all the components need to make their contribution. The contribution of the military component, for the most part, is protecting civilians but also — most important — as an enabler and a platform if we want the other components to achieve or make their contribution. In that regard, I mean being able to protect and facilitate access — for example in human rights, political affairs and other components — so that they can do their work in the various places.

We have the responsibility of ensuring the access of humanitarian actors and delivery of humanitarian aid for the recipients. We have the responsibility of supporting the peace process and the peace agreement. In particular, we are talking about support to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), which is supposed to monitor and follow up on violations, which in the end helps the force to move the peace process forward.

What I am saying here is that, in the achievement of our mandate, the military component makes its contribution and, in our case, if the question is whether or not we have an understandable and implementable mandate and whether the military component understands us and is ready to make its contribution, the answer is yes. But, for that to happen, we need to address some of the challenges such as those I made reference to previously, which include having the numbers mandated.

I made reference to the fact that we have not reached the ceiling in the number of troops and enablers that the Council has made available to us. For example, the Regional Protection Force (RPF), whose various components are supposed to be at a strength of 4,000 personnel, has stood at slightly over 50 per cent inducted since 2016. Even then, critical enablers such as tactical helicopters and combat engineering elements, which are supposed to help protect and improve our security, are not with us yet. It is therefore important that, while we understand and are ready, we need to be supported and given the resources, especially those that are within our ceiling.

We have talked about intelligence and information as important components for being able to do our work. Information, specifically peacekeeping intelligence, is critical to proper planning and the utilization of the resources at our disposal. Once we have information, we are able to prioritize and employ our resources appropriately and, in doing so, become efficient and protect our troops and those whom we are charged with protecting.

I made reference to looking into the use of surveillance and other technologies to help us efficiently manage the protection-of-civilian sites and allow us to get more troops into other areas, thereby enabling us to create a better environment for the return of those in the protection sites and a more secure environment for the return of those who fled the country. That is happening in places where I indicated that, after inducting the initial elements of the RPF, we will be able to send out troops from Juba and deploy them in the Equitorias so that we improve access as well as security. That has been done to the extent that some people are already coming back from Uganda, where they had fled to refugee camps. Some have come back, not necessarily to permanently settle, but to see what they can do in the areas they left. That should improve as we receive more troops who are transitioning from static functions to deployment in areas where people were displaced or fled from during the conflict.

I will quickly address some specific questions, starting with the question from the representative of the United Kingdom on sexual exploitation and abuse. I would first say that, as a mission, we are committed to implementing the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. For the peacekeeping force, that translates into critical and serious command responsibility, because

it also constitutes a protection issue. We cannot allow our forces to abuse or disrespect the people whom we are charged to protect. It is therefore, first and foremost, command responsibility to ensure that policy is implemented.

As a mission, we have also been able to undertake risk assessments of all the positions and areas of operation of our troops. Moreover, we have created an environment in which information is easy to access and transmit, which bolsters prevention. In instances where we unfortunately receive allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse, action is swiftly taken to initiate thorough investigations and collective measures by both the Mission and, where required, national investigators, who receive our full support and cooperation so that we are able to get to the bottom of allegations and take corrective measures. Those are some of the mechanisms in place, which we are working on and continuously improving to ensure that the policy is adhered to.

There was a question about further increasing the number of female members among our contingents. That is primarily the responsibility of the troop-contributing countries, as we employ and deploy the human resources that we receive. We appreciate that some troop-contributing countries have yet to achieve the quotas and numbers required. However, I wish to recognize the contribution from Headquarters and troop-contributing countries. I think that, in response to our meeting last year on 7 July in New York, where Chiefs of Defence pledged to make a difference and increase the numbers of female personnel, we have seen a slight increase of both female officers and female members of contingents in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). I would like to commend Headquarters and troop-contributing countries, and I urge for such progress to be continued; we cannot over-emphasize the importance of the contribution of the female members of our contingents.

The representative of Sweden also asked about the flexibility and employment of brigade unit intervention, such as the Regional Protection Force and, if I am correct, the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to UNMISS and the Regional Protection Force in particular, when the RPF was conceived, in 2016, it was mandated with carrying out specific tasks in Juba. However, since 2016 the situation in Juba has changed, and requirements and changes have arisen in other parts of the country, leading to demands on the Mission. As such, our current mandate includes some flexibility. In addition to making a difference and carrying out its originally mandated tasks in Juba, the RPF has also been able to intervene and make a difference, where required, together with UNMISS forces.

In that regard, I also mentioned in my briefing that we had taken advantage of the deployment of the RPF and its induction into the Mission to move UNMISS forces that were originally elsewhere to the south of the country by first reinforcing company operating bases, so that we can improve security and outreach and also open new bases, particularly in Yei, where I mentioned the impact of improved security and access. It is the same engineers and enablers of the RPF who are helping to build bases and open roads, which are generally supporting the Mission. As such, the employment and deployment of the RPF and its enablers is improving the situation in Juba. The Force is carrying out the currently required tasks and is also helping to make a difference outside of Juba. As I said, we would like to receive combat engineers, who are supposed to be a component of the RPF, as well as tactical helicopters, which would enable us to project and protect our forces and improve the chances of the Mission achieving its mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the question asked by the representative of Equatorial Guinea on whose responsibility it is to achieve mission mandates. It is the responsibility of everyone, because the primacy of a political solution has been underlined. That is the responsibility of everyone, including — or starting from — the Security Council, the United Nations Headquarters, regional actors and, most important, the parties to the conflict. For their part, missions are responsible for the tasks that create an environment that is going to help enable the actors or the parties to the conflict to achieve a political settlement. Therefore, all of us have a role to play. For a mission to be achieved, or for a mandate to be achieved, everybody has a role. But, as underlined again by one of my colleagues, it is us — the missions — who are in the tactical position or environment that requires action, especially in terms of protecting civilians who are vulnerable.

Creating that important environment for political discussions and engagement is therefore an important responsibility. But, again, it is important that everyone

contribute — starting from the political to the tactical, security and protective environment that is required for the achievement of the different mandates that we have been given. The mandates are clear, workable and achievable so long as everybody makes their contribution.

On that note, I want to thank everyone and express my gratitude for the opportunity to express our ideas, as well as to appreciate and ask once again for the Council's support as we carry out our mandate and our responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.